

# Monitoring quality data over time

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide looks at how the power of AUSSE data grows over time, how to work with AUSSE data in the short term, and the importance of establishing your dataset as early as possible.

## Monitoring – what are the benefits?

Your AUSSE results are most powerful when you compare how they change over time. Monitoring your results over time allows you to:

- identify areas for improvement
- identify areas where performance seems to be getting weaker
- set improvement targets
- identify professional development priorities for academic and general staff
- monitor the impact of improvements you introduce
- help you tell your positive quality improvement story to your students, to accreditation and quality assurance bodies, and to your professional networks.

## AUSSE's first few years

Let's look at data from the one of the AUSSE scales – the Work Integrated Learning Scale – as an example. Assume these are the outcomes over two years for later year students.

Scale	Year	
	2007	2008
Work Integrated Learning Scale	37	43

In the first year or two, you won't be able to see clear performance trends. It might be that there is an improving trend. But initially you will need to rely more heavily on other data to help explain the AUSSE results. The other data you use could include those derived from evaluations or reviews of your work integrated learning programs, follow up surveys, focus groups or cognitive interviews. Analysing your data with benchmarking partners may help you see your work integrated learning programs in a new way, and may give you useful ideas for tackling areas of apparent underperformance.

Developing a broader frame of reference is time well spent. The expertise you build in gathering and working with complementary information will be useful for your quality improvement practices over the long term.

Your AUSSE results can tell you where to look for good news, or for problem areas. But interpreting AUSSE data will always rely on the specifics of your institution and your students' characteristics. No two institutions, no two faculties, are the same.

## AUSSE over the long term

If we extend the Work Integrated Learning Scale data to five years, you can see how your AUSSE results become more powerful over time.

Scale	Year				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Work Integrated Learning Scale	37	43	41	58	66

It might be that the student response to your work integrated learning program between 2007 and 2009 was not improving, but moving within a consistent range. It might be that in 2010 you introduced an improved approach to work integrated learning which accounts for the substantial improvement. The 2011 outcome is better still, perhaps because you ironed out some teething problems encountered in 2010. You can check the 2012 data to see if the uptick to 66 per cent is maintained.

Only you know the story behind the numbers. Only you can tell it. Every university, every faculty, is different.

## Start now

None of this means that the first two years' results are useless. The first two or three years of AUSSE data need to be seen in the context of your long term quality improvement cycle:

- there will be a long-term benefit from the surveys only if you start a sound collection now
- a sound collection requires you to ensure that your sample sizes are large enough each year to enable you to make solid comparisons with data from other years
- making a start demonstrates to learners and to other stakeholders that your quality improvement strategy will use the AUSSE data purposefully
- you can benchmark your outcomes with the national and international data, and your benchmarking partners
- you can use the data to set improvement targets for following years and to monitor performance.

Your first two or three years of AUSSE data will give you a good idea of what needs work and what is going well.

## About this guide

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide forms part of the suite of resources developed by ACER to assist institutions to enhance their students' engagement in effective educational practices. Visit [www.acer.edu.au/ausse](http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse) for further information about the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement.